



**Rhode Island Department
of Health**

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www.health.ri.gov

Interim Health Advisory

Date: August 21, 2009

To: All Rhode Islanders

From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH

Re: **Care of Individuals with Suspected or Confirmed H1N1 (Swine)
Influenza Virus Infection**

Official Recommendations - In The Home

These recommendations apply to any individuals with fever AND cough OR sore throat:

- Keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible
- Remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
- Have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- Ask your healthcare provider if household contacts of the sick person—specifically those contacts who are at high risk for complications of influenza (e.g., persons with certain chronic medical conditions, persons 65 or older, children younger than 5 year old, and pregnant women)—should take antiviral medications such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) to prevent the flu.
- Unless necessary for medical care, adults and children who are ill should not leave the home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- If persons who are ill need to leave the home (i.e., for medical care), they should cover their nose and mouth with coughing or sneezing.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant. (Further guidance available at http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance_homecare.htm)

- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.) Keep the sickroom door closed.

Protect other persons in the home

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. (Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and immunity can be suppressed during pregnancy).
- All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).
- Antivirals can be used to prevent the flu, so check with your healthcare provider to see if some persons in the home should use antiviral medications.

If you are the caregiver

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues, or laundry.
- Talk to your health care provider about taking antiviral medication to prevent the caregiver from getting the flu.
- **Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if symptoms occur that are severe enough to require medical attention.**